

## Digital is not the answer, but the question

We should start from here to try to reflect serenely on our relationship with resources that grow under our eyes and often plunge us into a conservative estrangement.

We often deal with a digital "made" before being "thought" and this inevitably unbalances us and places us at a disadvantage. The conservation equation is not solved by fighting obsolescence. Of course the technical data is that, indubitable. But we have the skills to defend ourselves from the aging of the instruments and their constantly accelerating expressive figures. Limiting ourselves to the technical data, however, makes us run the risk of falling into even naive, almost myth-making readings. The data, on the other hand, are real, they trigger chain reactions of metadata and meta-metadata (the need to document documentation...) and impose on us conservative approaches overturned in space and time.

Conservation must be planned, the order is upstream and no longer downstream. From the classical archival point of view this reversal has important consequences but it is not a novelty that the method of archivists evolves together with society. The archives, all the archives, have always been children of those present. Having said this, to save us from possible digital amnesia, having specified that every conservative event has always involved physiological dispersions, they can only be conscious cultural policies, even though they are not seen on the horizon.

The digital issue is also above all a political fact, because archives are essentially a political fact. Unfortunately, however, there is no planning will on the horizon and there is insistence on a massive and standardizing approach to digitalization, perceived only in its mechanical dimension and not as a process of reengineering society.

The digital resources we use are the armed arm of the dematerialization process, a process that, as we now well know, goes far beyond the change of format.

Thinking digital then means being available to negotiate a whole series of values that are changing, in search of sustainable solutions, "without damage to history and the administration". And, above all, without indulging in comparative evaluations between an analogue before and a digital after. There are no revolutions, only transformations, more or less accelerated evolutions. And for the informational universe this is true from the very first cuneiform signs. Technical and social evolutions are not subject to evaluation but factual data.

While waiting for a desirable project, for which it would be worth fighting loudly, the themes of selection (what we can decide to keep) and the, even more urgent, contextualization (why and how we keep) remain on the table.

Digitization can in fact lead to a sort of return monasticism, to the more or less conscious selection and editing of documentary clips detached from their contexts and therefore to a redefinition - powerful because digital - of reality itself.

These risks also signal the need to work with more attention to a new conceptualization of terms which, starting from the archive and its derivatives, now define paradigms, contents and functions that are articulated and largely distant from the original ones.

In the background, to encourage us on this path, there are now friendly applications of artificial intelligence, since technologies typically tend to solve the problems they themselves have generated by evolving.

Without parabolic millennial anxieties, we must try to use them to help us decline these non-negotiable values into new scenarios.

After all, one who knew the future, Isaac Asimov, wrote even in 1954 that "we will return to the earth but on different worlds" ...

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